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ABSTRACT

The development of a 6-year strategic plan at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston School of Nursing is described. Major features of the plan include the organization of a planning task force with both faculty and administrative representation, a modified Delphi survey of faculty opinions about future directions for the school and the university, and extensive involvement of faculty in review and write-up of the school's future goals. Benefits of the planning process included the development of realistic and prioritized goals for the school, increased participation of faculty in programmatic and budgetary planning, and the preservation of administrative review and approval of final schoolwide priorities. Problems encountered during the process included evidence of discrepancies between faculty and administrative goals for the school, and problems associated with insufficient time allotted to conduct the process and to provide ample opportunities for extensive faculty discussion of final plans. Each 6-year plan was to include the information on: mission, the status of implementation of each goal, internal and external conditions that the school should address, descriptions of planned program changes, and a contingency plan. An overview of the mission of the nursing school is included. (Author/SW)

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The Role of Institutional Research and Planning Offices in Institutional Planning:

Starting a New Planning Effort: A Case Study of The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to describe the process used by The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston School of Nursing to develop its Six-Year Strategic Plan. The Health Science Center is a component of The University of Texas System.

Major features of the plan included the organization of a Planning Task Force with both faculty and administrative representation, a modified Delphi survey of faculty opinions about future directions for the School and the University, and extensive involvement of faculty in review and write up of the School's future goals.

Benefits experienced by the School as a result of the process included the development of a set of realistic and prioritized goals for the School, increased participation of faculty in programmatic and budgetary planning, and the preservation of administrative review and approval of final School-wide priorities. Problems encountered during the process included evidence of discrepancies between faculty and administrative goals for the School, and problems associated with insufficient time allotted to conduct the process and to provide ample opportunities for extensive faculty discussion of final plans.

Starting a New Planning Effort

I am pleased to have the opportunity to share with you some of the techniques we have used and lessons we have learned about institutional planning from getting a planning process underway. I hope that these experiences will be of some use to you as you attempt to develop, undertake, or strengthen planning efforts at your own institutions.

Institutional Setting

The University of Texas School of Nursing at Houston is one of seven clinical schools of The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. Our Health Science Center is one of the six academic health science components of The University of Texas.

The School of Nursing endorses the mission of the Health Science Center of education, research, and service which includes providing health care to Texas citizens. Specifically our mission is to:

> provide programs of the highest quality for undergraduate and graduate students designed to achieve the needs of the health care delivery system.
>
> contribute to the advancement of the science of Nursing through research.
>
> provide service programs which will enhance the general health care of citizens in the arenas of primary, secondary, and tertiary health prevention.
>
> participate in local, state, and national organizations which would benefit from the expertise of the Health Science Center School of Nursing faculty.

In regards to academic offerings, the School offers a generic baccalaureate program for students interested in entering the profession of nursing, which can be described as a traditional curriculum for junior and senior transfer students. The School also offers a somewhat more flexible program for Registered nurses who wish to obtain a baccalaureate degree. This option provides registered nurses with the opportunity to test out of required courses through credit-by-examination. The programs are accredited by the National League for Nursing and the Board of Nurse Examiners of the State of Texas.

The School also offers a graduate program leading to a Master of Science in Nursing degree. This program offers advanced nursing preparation for roles as clinical specialists, teachers, and administrators in Emergency Care Nursing, Gerontology Nursing, Oncology Nursing, Critical Care Nursing, and Perinatal Nursing, the nursing care of newborns and their families. All graduate specializations are accredited by the National League for Nursing.

Planning Goals of The University of Texas Board of Regents

In 1981, the Board of Regents developed a set of planning goals for all of the components of the system. Through these goals, the Board identified its intent to review and clarify the mission of each institution, and to increase each institution's responsiveness to the opportunities and challenges which are generated by conditions and constituencies beyond the campus. The Board also hoped that these goals might help to improve the performance of the four basic constituencies, administrators, faculty, staff, as well as students, within each institution.

Guidelines and Purposes of the Planning Programs

At the time that the Board of Regents identified its planning goals, it was further mandated by the Board that each institution should undertake a strategic planning program. This planning effort was to be highly individualized to each campus and, at the same time, was to be developed as a grass roots effort on each campus.

Specifically, the Board of Regents mandated the following:

1) that each institution in the System shall implement an ongoing strategic planning program.

2) that the planning program at each institution shall be designed to assess and improve the institution's ability to enhance the personal skills and knowledge of its students.

3) that the president of each institution shall have primary responsibility for developing and implementing the planning program for his campus.

4) that the planning program at each institution shall be developed with the involvement of faculty, other institutional constituencies, community leaders, and outside consultants, as is appropriate.

5) that the planning program at each institution shall interrelate budgetary, academic, and facilities planning so as to maximize the effective use of all of the institution's resources.

At the Health Science Center at Houston, an Executive Director for Planning position was established out of the President's Office to provide analytical support to the various clinical schools as needed.

Our institution is highly decentralized in its management. The Health Science Center complex was only developed 11 years ago, while some of the schools, the Dental Branch for example, have been in existence for over 30 years. Consequently, in each of the schools, the planning function was also delegated to administrators or new personnel were hired to assume these tasks. In the School of Nursing, the Dean was initially responsible to organize and complete the plan.

The planning program at each institution was to be designed to include an analysis of the changing needs for instructional, research, and service programs and activities within the area and among the population served by the institution. The Board was also convinced that the institutional planning programs would 1) seek to identify the institution's unique functions in order to clarify its mission, 2) identify the programs of teaching, research, and service which contribute or should contribute, most successfully, to fulfillment of the institution's mission, and 3) develop ways to sustain and improve programs and reduce institutional investment in other programs as appropriate. The Board also intended that these programs would serve as a means for reassessing institutional standards for faculty, staff, and administrative performance and for reassessing institutional standards for student performance and student admission.

It was anticipated that these plans would also provide the Board with a broader look at needs throughout the system and that the plans would create some measures by which program quality in the components could be monitored and evaluated. Furthermore, it was quite clear that the planning process would also assist the components in improving management and accountability in their individual operations.

The final purposes of the plans were in the area of budget needs and allocations. It was indicated to the institutions that their planning programs should provide ways to seek new support in all beneficial forms from private sources outside each institution. Ultimately, budget allocations for 1985-1987 would be based on the plans. Plans would also be used to allocate bond proceeds from the Permanent University Fund, if the amendment passed which would extend these proceeds to all schools and campuses in the system. So, in retrospect, this year, both schools and institutions had an especially keen interest in assuring that their respective plans clearly spelled out their needs at least until they had a chance to modify their plans in 1985 when the cycle will be repeated.

The School of Nursing's Planning Process

In Fall 1982, the School of Nursing developed its first strategic plan. The plan was generally an administrative effort, with members of the Dean's Administrative Council identifying education, research, and service goals for the 1983-1989 period for each of the School's teaching and service programs.

However, this year, a different approach was used to develop the plan for 1985-1991.

Our intent, this year, was to achieve a balance by increasing the amount of faculty input and participation in the planning process and, at the same time, by insuring administrative review and approval of the goals outlined.

Design. How did we design the process? Let's first look at planning approach parameters.

We established in advance that there were both limits and features that would need to be incorporated into the finished plan. These included:

1) faculty input through mailed questionnaire.

   We wanted to use some systematic means for gathering opinions which also assured privacy of faculty views.

2) faculty representatives' preparation of conceptual plan.

   We wanted to incorporate a statement of program philosophy into the plan which would guide future decisions about program modifications.

3) write-up of Planning draft by School's planning representative.

   We intended that the final plan would be written by one individual in collaboration with members of the Planning Task Force.

4) faculty and School of Nursing Dean's Council review of planning drafts.

5) dean's review, revision, if necessary, and approval of final planning document.

Composition of the UTSN Planning Task Force. We next developed a Task Force to carry out the planning process.

The Planning Task Force was organized to include both faculty and administrative representation. Members of the Task Force included: two representatives appointed from the Undergraduate Program Faculty, two representatives appointed from the Graduate Program faculty, and members of the School of Nursing's Dean's Council, which included the Assistant Deans of the Graduate and Undergraduate programs, the Director of Student Affairs, the Director of the Learning Resource Center and the Special Assistant to the Dean who served as the School's Planning Representative. The Assistant to the Dean was appointed to prepare budgets associated with the plan.

The Dean of the School of Nursing served as the Chairperson of this Task Force. However, it was the responsibility of the Planning Representative, who was also a member of the faculty, to work closely with the Task Force throughout the process while keeping the Dean informed of the group's progress as the plan developed. We were convinced that this arrangement would best facilitate faculty ownership of the plan once the Task Force's recommendations were made. This arrangement gave the Task Force considerable freedom to function in workgroups around specific aspects of the plan. A large part of the

subsequent success of the Task Force could certainly be attributed to the freedom which the groups enjoyed in carrying out their tasks.

Expected Outcomes of the Planning Process. In defining these guidelines and in organizing a Planning Task Force, we hoped to achieve several outcomes:

- greater involvement of individual faculty in the planning process
- the establishment of School-wide priorities rather than program-based priorities
- faculty rankings of the previous year's goals and identification of new goals which the School might address
- more extensive faculty awareness of school-wide agendas and administrative goals that only the Deans were generally aware of
- administrative review and approval of school-wide priorities which both faculty and administration had identified

Outline for the Six Year Plan. Throughout the planning process, the Planning Task Force worked with an outline developed for the components by The University of Texas System Office of Planning and Analysis.

Each Six Year Plan for 1985-1991 was to include the following:

1) a mission statement
2) a summary of the status of implementation of each goal identified in the 1983-1989 plan
3) a discussion of external conditions, which the school should address and which would affect achievement of its goals
4) a discussion of internal conditions which might affect achievement of its goals
5) a conceptual plan, which would provide a rationale for future program changes based on assumptions which were derived from internal and external conditions
6) a list of descriptions of planned program changes, e.g. add program x, conduct review of program y, establish program z, and conduct feasibility study of program d

7) a contingency plan, which identified additional plans which would be undertaken if a 5% increase was experienced in year 1 of the proposed budget year (FY 1986)

8) A contingency plan, which identified what programs or services should be cut if a 10% decrease was experienced in Year 1 of the proposed budget year (FY 1986)

Questionnaire and Questionnaire Procedures. A subgroup of faculty members serving on the Planning Task Force was asked to carry out a survey of faculty opinions about past and future goals for the School.

This survey was intended to assess faculty opinions about the importance of the School's 1983-1989 goals, to assess faculty opinions about future goals for the School of Nursing, and to rank goals according to the importance to the School's and Health Science Center's educational, research, and service missions.

What procedures were used to carry out the survey? The faculty subgroup first consolidated all 1983-1989 goals into survey items and developed a rating scale which would rank importance of each goal to the School's and Health Science Center's mission. A 1-point to 5-point scale (1=very important, 5= not important) was used to rate these items.

The survey was based on a modified Delphi approach. The survey was mailed to all faculty members and consisted of two rounds of faculty rankings. During the first round, faculty members ranked 1983-1989 goals in order of importance to future development of the School. At this time, faculty were also invited to add new goals which they thought that the School should address to assure future development.

During the second round of rankings, all goals, including any new ones identified by faculty, were ranked again and overall average rankings of each goal were obtained. All goals were then ranked. Clusters of ratings emerged which provided the subcommittee with evidence to justify creating a final scale for interpreting these results. Subsequently, final rankings were interpreted according to the following scale:

1.0-2.0 Goals of highest priority

2.1-2.5 Goals of high priority which should be undertaken if additional funds become available

2.6-5.0 Goals of low priority

Document Write-Up and Review Procedures. The Task Force completed the planning process by collaborating in the writing up of survey results. The Conceptual Plan section of the document was prepared by faculty members serving on the Task Force. Remaining sections were written by the Planning Representative and returned to Task Force members for reaction, revisions, and written comments. Two rounds of revisions of the final planning draft were carried out.

Dissemination Procedures

The final planning document was presented to the Health Science Center Executive Council in August 1983. An Executive Summary was distributed to Executive Council members to highlight the most important findings of the survey. An oral presentation was made by the planning representative which highlighted the School's planning process as well as its findings and final Six-Year goals. All plans of each of the Schools were presented at this session.

After that session, the Executive Office for Planning requested clarification from all schools on several key areas in their plans to better familiarize that office with the future directions of the individual schools.

Each school's plans were again presented to the President by the Planning Office Staff in October 1983. Our school has developed an excellent rapport with this office and we worked very closely with Executive Office staff throughout our process. Consequently, our Executive planning representative was especially familiar with our goals and the future directions of our programs.

Final Review

The Executive Planning Office has now summarized each of the school's plans into a central document which identifies the general directions in which each of the clinical schools and the Health Science Center will head. The President and the Executive Vice President for Administration and Finance ranked all intended program changes for each of the Schools in the order of institutional priority. The UTHSC planning document and each of the School's plans were submitted to The University of Texas System Office of Planning and Analysis in late November 1983. The President will again have an opportunity to present institutional priorities to The University of Texas Board of Regents in late Spring 1984. It is expected that the Board will approve or disapprove each institution's plans in total, but will leave establishment of individual priorities up to each component.

Consequences of the Planning Process

The Six-Year Plan of the School of Nursing has now been distributed to members of our faculty for further discussion. The faculty and our administration have established five Task Forces to carry out the program changes identified in the document.

Benefits. After having carried out such a process, numerous benefits have been experienced by our school which serve to encourage us to repeat the process at a future date.

1) Development of a set of realistic prioritized goals.

   As a result of this process, our School now has a set of realistic and prioritized goals for the next 8 years which the faculty can both support and endorse.

2) Increased participation of faculty in all phases of the academic planning process.

For the first time in our School, many faculty and administrators were involved in the planning process. A total of 23 out of 52 faculty members provided goal rankings and new goal statements. Five faculty members helped to write the Conceptual Plan, our statement of program philosophy. Three faculty members helped to develop the discussion of significant external conditions affecting our School in future years.

Many faculty members were involved in reviewing the planning document and recommending changes. Thirteen members of our faculty reviewed drafts of the plan and recommended changes; six members of the School of Nursing's Dean's Council reviewed drafts of the plan and recommended changes.

3) Preservation of administrative review and approval of final school-wide priorities.

In addition to having a strong desire to significantly increase faculty participation in the planning process, we wanted to preserve administrative review and approval of final School-wide priorities. The Dean of the School of Nursing and the Planning representative met daily for over a week carefully reviewing each page of the final draft. This process insured that the document would represent faculty views and at the same time would reflect administrative priorities and budgetary limitations.

Problems Encountered During the Planning Process. In addition to experiencing benefits, our Task Force also encountered its share of problems in getting the process completed.

1) Discrepancies between faculty and administrative goals.

Some discrepancies between administrative and faculty views became apparent in several goals, especially in the area of new program development.

The Dean of the School of Nursing and the President of the Health Science Center both wished to explore the feasibility of establishing a doctoral program in nursing at the university, and a graduate program to prepare family nurse practitioners. Faculty did not express strong support for initiating new program development at this time. Consequently, two faculty Task Forces have now been organized to explore the feasibility of establishing these two programs.

The findings of the two Task Forces will provide more factual information as to whether or not these programs should be initiated at this time.

2) Limited time available to conduct the planning process.

We were allotted approximately four months to complete our School's portion of the planning process. As the system becomes more clear as to the nature and the schedule for this process, we expect that we will have earlier warning and a longer period for preparing our plans. Ample time is essential for providing opportunities for faculty to review and discuss future directions of the School and the institution, and to carefully review the planning documents which are prepared. Even with considerable organization by the Planning Task Force, the process will not be successful unless faculty members have a chance to express their reservations, concerns, and ideas about future growth and development.

Our School was fortunate in that we enjoy the partnership of a president and a school administration which is supportive of faculty participation in planning. Our faculty, as well, are enthusiastic about increasing their involvement in governance and institutional decision-making.

As a result we capitalized on the timing of the Board's planning mandate to substantially increase faculty involvement in decision-making about the School's and, consequently, our institution's future directions.